

*THE SPIRIT'S WORK OF GRACE.

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In the two lectures that remain of this course, I will have time for a discussion only of those works of the Holy Spirit that are fundamental and universal. I cannot possibly take up for consideration all the references that are made to Him and His work in the New Testament. Many of these give us those phases of the Spirit's operations that are merely incidental to His main work and that were peculiar to that age. To fix the mind on these as if they were central, is to lose the right perspective.

If what was said in the other lecture is true, it is not a difficult thing to separate between those things the Holy Spirit came to do for all men and all ages, and those that were incidental or temporary. If the Third Person of the Trinity has become identified with the person and work of Christ as the Second Person of the Trinity was incarnated in Jesus of Nazareth, we can certainly know that the chief things in Christ's work are the chief things in the Spirit's work. This would seem to need no emphasis. I, therefore, will speak in this lecture of the Holy Spirit's work of grace and in the next of His work as the Paraclete.

HIS WORK OF GRACE.

Perhaps I should say His works of grace, for there are several phases of this work that I will consider. But before taking them up, I want to point out what is central and common to all of them.

I can give it in one sentence: The Holy Spirit in His work of grace enables the cross of Christ to have its due and intended effect upon the believing heart. About all

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that I have to say in this lecture is said in that statement. Let us suppose a man standing before the sacred and moving scenes of Calvary; and let us also suppose that he has by faith a true knowledge of what it means and of what is taking place there for his salvation. What would be the effect and effects on him? What would be its message to his heart and life? What kind of feelings would it produce in him? What kind of repentance? What would be his estimate of sin? of self? of his fellow man? of the love of God? What would be his purposes in life as he left the cross? We would all answer these questions in practically the same language; and the answers that we would give would be true of any human being who stood before that cross and saw it aright, however evil he may have been, or however moral, whether he be Saul of Tarsus or the publican. The message and the effects of the cross are practically the same in every heart where they are received. That great transaction produces a state of heart that accords with it; that fits in with it as the two parts of an indenture fit each other. The cross created an earnestness that matches its seriousness; a humility that is prostrate before its greatness; a reverence that reflects its divinity; a confession that accords with its sacrifice; a joy that is one with its assurance; and a surrender of life that is yielded to the great purposes of the cross.

Such, in a measure, are the due effects of the cross on a believer. It does not have these effects on all men; but when men see it aright, it does. What I wish to say in this lecture is that these very effects are the work of the Holy Spirit in exactly the same way that they are effects of the cross. It is His blessed and powerful work in the heart that enables the cross of Christ to produce these results. In all their work of grace the two are one, the cross never working apart from the Spirit; the Spirit never doing His work of grace apart from the cross. When men do not yield to the Spirit, the cross is nothing to them; when men reject the cross, the Spirit has no grace

for them. Yet, I would not be understood as saying that the Holy Spirit has no work of any kind or message for men, other than as He speaks in the cross. His work of saving grace is here; and it can be added that all His other work for men has reference also to the cross of Christ.

There is, for instance, a prevenient work of grace which leads men to the cross. The Scriptures speak of it as a work of the Father; but any of us who would assert that it was not of the Spirit would be presuming too far. Of the work itself, there can be no doubt. Jesus said, "No man can come to me except the Father that sent me draw him"; and in many other places it is taught and implied; "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee but my Father which is in Heaven". The prodigal was brought to himself. A good work was done on the hearts of Cornelius and of Lydia, and it was this good work that prepared them for the message of the cross. The older theologians called this work the "prevenient work of grace". It is a good name for it. In it the Father uses other instruments besides the cross; among others, these: education, rearing, judgment-providences, examples, the law, death, heaven, hell. I do not deny that the Spirit is operative in this work. But it is instructive to note that it is not referred to the Spirit, but to the Father. It is a work that should be carefully distinguished from regeneration, for it is a grace that can be bestowed in vain; but when yielded to, it prepares the heart for the cross of our Lord and for that saving message that cannot be received in vain.

HIS WORK OF REGENERATION.

Regeneration is the Holy Spirit's chief work in man's redemption. It is in order to ask, what is this experience? I will not go into the many differing answers to this question, and I raise the question, chiefly, to confess how much

we need even in our evangelical and Baptist theologies a better statement of this important doctrine than we have. We all agree in rejecting the sacramentarian or sacerdotal view; but as a matter of fact the teaching of some of our orthodox books but poorly limps away from the worst features of the sacramentarian position. Much of this teaching gives no place to the cross of Christ or to the human will in this experience, and a very insufficient place to the Holy Spirit. It deflects the mind from the tremendous fact of the abiding presence of the Spirit in the believer's heart to metaphysical questions which are entirely beyond us.

I do not pretend to be able to give a satisfactory statement of the doctrine of regeneration. But what the Scriptures certainly teach is that when a man accepts the grace of God offered in Christ Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes into his heart in a very unique sense. He comes to dwell in the man's heart, to be united with him in such way as to give the heart "vital" union with Christ. His coming thus into the believer's heart is radically different from all previous work or influence of the Spirit for the man; for in that previous work he exerted an influence from the outside of the personality: in this he takes on an indissoluble union with the believer's personality. The metaphysical changes which attend this union are beyond us. But there are tremendous moral changes, the changes in man's nature, in the *personality* of the man; in his motives, in his relations, in his allegiances, in his self-estimate, in the spiritual order of his soul, and these are not beyond us.

These are moral changes and come from the single fact that God Himself has become united with the man in living, spiritual union. It is this reunion that makes the new man, that produces the new birth which we call regeneration. It is this union, and not some unknowable "germ of being", which contains all the possibilities of the Christian's future in time and eternity. The first

part of the eighth chapter of Romans ought to be read in this connection. The apostle there has nothing to say of the "germ of a new being" in the heart from which the Christian nature grows as from a seed: but, again and again, from first one viewpoint and then another, he calls attention to the Spirit's union with the Christian's heart as the all-significant thing. In that great passage the Spirit Himself, and not even some new creation of the Spirit, is looked on as the direct source of all the new grace and power of the light that streams on the transfigured cloud. I do not deny that profound metaphysical changes are wrought in the human heart by the presence of the Spirit. I confess these changes. But it is a mistake to center the mind on them as if they were the germ and fountain of the new life. Rather the New Testament focuses almost all attention on the ineffable fact of the union itself, the profound cause of all the changes that come, first in the Christian's personality and afterward in his nature.

Now this union, so unique and productive, in which the Holy Spirit takes up His abiding presence in the believing heart, is formed at the cross of Christ and is mediated by its reconciliation. The believer's part is the surrender of the life to God in Christ, moved by the mercy of God to repentance and faith: and God's part is the gracious acceptance of the surrendered life and, in token thereof, the bestowment of the Holy Spirit who comes into the believer's heart, creating the sense of full pardon and sonship, of confidence, joy and assurance. In other words, the Holy Spirit becomes in the believing heart the living expression of the cross. The initial cry of the regenerated heart is *Abba, Father*, which is the voice of the Holy Spirit, which is the message of the cross of Christ to everyone who accepts its grace. This is the regeneration that is symbolized in baptism, that is wrought as all Scripture teaches by the Word and the Spirit.

I will call attention to two corollaries of this doctrine:

First: Regeneration is the source and basis for Christian freedom. "For ye received not the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but received the Spirit of adoption." "For ye brethren were called for freedom." The apostles believed that freedom was of the very essence of the Christian spirit. But this conviction can be felt only when the doctrine of regeneration is maintained in its purity. The sacramentarian or sacerdotal doctrine of the new birth ministers to anything but freedom. It ascribes regeneration to the Spirit, it is true, but it ties the Spirit to an ordinance, a priest and a church. The effect is to subject the regenerated man to those who have his salvation in their hands. It could not do anything else. Bondage lies in the very germ of such a doctrine.

This, for the sacramentarian doctrine. And as for any doctrine of regeneration, either sacramentarian or evangelical, which centers the mind on metaphysical changes, rather than on a rehabilitation of the will and personality, I for one am unable to see in such doctrine a basis for a true freedom.

But the New Testament doctrine of regeneration is the greatest principle of freedom that ever entered into social life and history. And it is this for three reasons: (1) In it the Spirit of God is received directly and immediately by the believer from the Saviour. There is no priest and church standing between the believer and his God. And what is true for one believer in this respect is true of all without any exception. The layman and the preacher, man and woman, white and black, one and all, are on an exact level and equality in the way they receive the Holy Spirit. Spiritual, official superiority and inferiority are simply eliminated. (2) It is none other than the Spirit of God that is received in regeneration, and He is received in such a union that the believer becomes the possessor of His light and power. He is the very mind of Christ in the mind of the believer, so truly so that

it can be said that Christ, Himself, dwells in the Christian. This is the all-significant fact for freedom, because it is this which, despite all the difference between believers, that makes them equals. There can be no freedom where some men feel themselves superior to others; or, on the other hand, where some have the consciousness of inferiority. But such feelings cannot exist among those men who are indwelt by God's Spirit. That common possession is so transcendent that it reduces to nothing the little superiorities of blood and talent, of color and race, which some might possess over their brothers: and wherever men are conscious that the Holy Spirit is in union with them, they cannot feel themselves inferior to any, it matters not who they are; nor will they submit to overlords, either in church or state or society. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." "If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." All men may not be born free and equal; but they are certainly born again free and equal. (3) But would not such a doctrine make Christians feel infinitely superior to others? It would not, because the Holy Spirit who dwells in them is mediated by the cross of Christ and is its innermost meaning in the consciousness of the believer. The very essence of that cross is humility, service, and sacrifice. It cannot produce a race dominated by egotism and an offensive superiority. So much for the bearing of the New Testament doctrine of regeneration on freedom.

Second: It also has a bearing on the widely prevalent belief in a "Second Blessing", a belief that there is a second work of grace different from regeneration received in a different kind of experience, and a work that is co-ordinated with regeneration. This belief has gained currency because of the defectiveness of the popular doctrine of regeneration. We have focussed attention on a regeneration of metaphysical changes in which the will had no part: and if this is true, it has been difficult for some to see why there could not and should not be an-

other experience in which the will of the believer had a part in the consecration of his life and in receiving the Spirit. This view would certainly pass away in the presence of a true statement of the New Testament doctrine of regeneration, for the reason that there would be no need of it, and also for the reason that its error would be manifest. If the Holy Spirit comes in regeneration to take His abiding place in the believer's personality and if it is this living union that makes the believer a new man, then this experience can never be repeated nor can any other experience that is to come be placed by the side of it. The union of the Holy Spirit with the believer's life is the all-inclusive blessing. All that comes afterward is but the growth of the fullness of this baptism, which is administered once and for aye, represents the full forgiveness and grace received in regeneration, and while other acts of God's cleansing mercy will be needed our Saviour Himself said: "He that hath been washed needs not to wash again, save his feet."

HIS WORK OF SANCTIFICATION.

In the Old Testament, both things and men were sanctified by being set apart to divine uses. Perhaps the idea back of this was that whatever was in the sphere of the Deity, became partakers of the divine nature.

Anyway, when we come to the New Testament we find that the apostles looked on sanctification as nothing less than the process of being changed into the likeness of the divine nature in Christ; yea, more than this; they saw in it the infusion of the divine nature into human nature. To them it was the continuation in history of the new creation which we see in the risen and glorified body of Christ; that is, through the Holy Spirit the powers of this glorious body are reproduced in believers, the offspring of Christ, as the powers of Adam's body were reproduced in his offspring. It is nothing less than a marvelous con-

ception. That some mysterious change takes place in the nature of Christians can be seen in their faces. What we are dealing with is the nature of this change and how it comes about. As to its nature, the Apostle Peter speaks of Christians as "partakers of divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust". Other New Testament writers agree with him.

As to how this mysterious change takes place: Everyone ascribes it to the work of the Holy Spirit. Some seem to think that this change comes from the growth and development of a "germ of a new being" implanted in regeneration, which new being is nurtured by the influences of the Spirit. It is difficult to discuss such a view, for one cannot know what it means. Others write of sanctification as if it is a work of the Spirit, rather than of the cross of Christ. "The cross saves us, but it is the Spirit that sanctifies us", they seem to say. It is this view, which separates the Spirit from the cross, that we are so liable to fall into. The supposition is that the cross obtained for us the gift of the Spirit, but after the Spirit has come He works on apart from the cross. In this way the work of the Spirit is separated from any mediation, and hence we can really know nothing about it.

Over against these views, I believe it is better to look on the Holy Spirit Himself, and not on some "germ of a new being" implanted in us, as the abiding source of all the wonderful change that takes place in the Christian. He is in living union with the Christian and it is His light, ever shining on our poor natures, that transforms them. When we do despite to Him, we begin to fall back into our own darkness.

The greatly important matter in this doctrine is that we keep the cross of Christ and the Holy Spirit inseparable. Here, again, the Spirit in us is the heart of that cross to us. As we grow in the knowledge of it, we are transformed by its grace. The greatest passage in the New Testament on sanctification does not mention either the

word "sanctification" or the name of the Spirit. It is Philippians 3:8-11 and describes what the cross was to Paul of Tarsus and how he entered into its grace and power. You know it well: "Yea, verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I suffered the loss of all things and count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God through faith: that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death: if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead."

It is nothing less than a wonderful passage. The apostle tells us of his own great longing for the growth of that change and transformation which at last issues in complete likeness to Christ: and he gives us the means by which this was being accomplished in his life. While he does not mention the name of the Holy Spirit, he describes His work. His mind is on the outward instrument of that of which the Holy Spirit is the inward power and there was no need to mention both. The one involves the other. What changed Paul's life was the cross of Christ and his own ceaseless efforts to know it, to feel all its correcting and encouraging power and to be shaped to its great ideals of life. He lived in the sphere of God and we may be sure he was changed day by day into the nature of Christ. And this is what he taught of all Christians: "But we all with unveiled faces beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are transformed unto the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord, the Spirit." This verse could be called the apostle's definition of how sanctification takes place.

Let me make an observation or two: Those forms of Christianity that make much use of the cross of Christ in the worship of their churches, even though they are

radically wrong in some essential doctrines, and even have a defective doctrine of the Spirit, have not failed to produce great and holy Christian characters. Those of us who are their staunchest enemies will not deny this. And, on the other hand, sanctity has died out of every form of Christianity that has denied the cross of Christ, though some of these forms have been notable for their intellectual leadership. Again, it is only as we connect sanctification with the direct influence of the cross that we can successfully cut the tap root of fanaticism on this subject. For instance: If we can grow in sanctification only as we grow in the knowledge of this cross, it is hardly possible to believe in instantaneous sanctification, for the reason that it is rather difficult to believe in instantaneous fullness of knowledge. And it is also true that if it is at the cross that men are truly sanctified, such men can never profess sinless perfection, for the reason that the cross produces an ever deepening sense and knowledge of sinfulness. Both of these fanaticisms have come from the tendency in modern times to consider the work of the Spirit as a work after and subsequent to and apart from the work of the cross.

HIS WORK OF FELLOWSHIP.

The Holy Spirit's work of fellowship has been overlooked in treatises on the subject; but it has quite a prominent place in the Scriptures. You recall the benediction: "And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Here the work of fellowship is classed with the love of God and the grace of Christ. The unity of the church is the expression of the Spirit's presence, so the apostle thought. "Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace." He expresses this more formally in the words: "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free;

and were all made to drink of one Spirit." One of the most tender appeals for unity the apostle ever wrote was an appeal "by the fellowship of the Spirit" to be of "one mind, of one soul". He felt this was a consideration for unity, which Christians simply could not ignore.

But sanctification has received a hundredfold more attentions from theologians than the Spirit's work of fellowship. Both doctrines are needed, for they balance each other. If men think too exclusively of their sanctification they become self-centered, leading some to retire from the world in their efforts for holiness and causing others to put forth rather pious pretensions. If men think too exclusively of fellowship it tends to an unhallowed fellowship. Sanctification is the conformity of the inward life to the grace of the cross; fellowship is the conformity of the social life to the law and spirit of the cross. Neither of these can be kept truly Christian if they are divorced the one from the other.

In the New Testament these doctrines are not divorced and cannot be, for both are the work of the cross of Christ. The Lord's Supper, the oft-repeated ordinance which brings to the memory of the believer the sacrifice of Calvary, has been thought of almost exclusively as a minister to sanctification, and I feel that this is one reason why it has been so often misunderstood and misused. In the New Testament it is also a minister to fellowship. It brings home to the heart of the worshiper the tremendous social message of the cross as well as its purifying, redeeming grace. If there a Christian is made to think of his own need of forgiveness and of how it is obtained, he is at the very same time made to think of the forgiving spirit and how it is to be exercised. And he learns, in the most powerful of all ways, that he cannot obtain the one without showing the other. If the Lord's Supper brings home the thought of one's individual salvation, it also does not let anyone forget his unity with others who share in that same redemption. There all

drink of the one Spirit, whether Jews or Greeks, bond or free, white or black, prodigals or elder brothers; and sitting there before the memory of the cross of Christ the things that separate men from men are rebuked as they are rebuked nowhere else in all the world. It is the ordinance that is to be kept until the Lord comes, for it is the great instrument that is preparing this unbrotherly world for His coming. No man who sits as he should in company with his fellows before the cross of Christ can go out and take one of them by the throat with, "Pay me that thou owest", or push one aside with "Make room for me, I am better than thou". But rather he will feel that the fellowship of Spirit is a bond so precious that it must be maintained at all costs to self-rights and in forbearance, forgiveness, love and service.

HIS WORK OF COMFORT.

In His work of comfort the Holy Spirit counteracts the effects which come in the wake of trial, loss and calamity. In it He speaks to the heart that is doubting, anxious, fearing, sorrowful, or rebellious. The Bible recognizes the undeniable fact that calamity brings a message to the heart, as well as suffering to the life; and to all seeming it is a message from God Himself. Ought men to see in the heavy trials and sufferings of life evidence that God is not love, or that He is against them? Whether they ought or not, it remains a fact that they do and have in all ages and lands done so. Those of whom this is not true have been and are the rare exceptions. The philosophy of indifference goes to pieces before calamity, like cobwebs before a cyclone; and whatever theories men may school themselves in, when great loss and sorrows come, they refer them to God.

And the natural effects on men's religious convictions are nothing less than fearful! Sin is the only other evil in the universe that is attended with worse consequences.

Life, it is true, is not by any means all loss and sorrow and trouble; but it is also certainly true that loss and sorrow and trouble are absolutely universal in this life. Every human being that is born into the world must pass through them. And their work has been to fill the hearts of countless billions of human beings with the profoundest suspicions of the divine Being. Because of them, fear, unbelief, and superstition have covered the earth. No religion can ignore this message of loss any more than it could ignore the work of sin.

But is there anything that can counteract in the very secrets of the heart of man the corrosive effects of this message? Is there anything that can give reality to the words: "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted"? or, are those words mere words? Answers have been made to these questions by atheism, by stoicism, by worldliness, by Christian Science, by the philosophy of sunshine and by countless isms. And these all sail well in good weather and light storms. But they go to pieces in those trials when men need help the most. They fail because they suppose that the manipulation of one's own mind is the same as changing the facts of life. But men can't blot out sorrow by shutting their eyes to it, and it is not possible always to keep the eyes shut to the fearful realities of this life. Soon or late men must face things as they are. And the great question is, can men look the very worst in the face and still rejoice in the love of God? If God has an answer to this question it must be in something more than words.

The answer which Christianity gives to this is the message of the Holy Spirit in the cross of Christ. That cross is the final, undeniable evidence that God is love. It is not the evidence of words, but the evidence of an act of sacrifice for men so great that we have no plummet to sound its depths. In the presence of that redeeming love, there cannot come a loss or trial that can say that God is against us. As men look on it, the Holy Spirit within

them gives the assurance that God is for them and is assuredly with them in their sorrows. The assurance is complete: "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled we shall be saved by His life." One who believes that has his heart cleansed of apprehension and fear. He may not be able to explain the dark places of life any better than others, but he knows that they cast no shadow over the love of God. The psalm that closes the eighth of Romans is his song.

But the triumph goes further than this. If God is with men in trials and if they can come to know it, then trials themselves change to another kind of message. They become a part of love's good purpose. In them the Christian not only conquers: he is "more than a conqueror". The things that are against him are turned about and become for him. "All things work together for good to them that love God." The man who has the love of God in the cross of Christ has more than "the hope of glory". He has the very worst this world can give changed into friendly angels.

Such is the wonderful message of the great apostle, "And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost that hath been given unto us."

Let me close by pointing out even at the risk of tiresome iteration that the Holy Spirit's work of comfort cannot be separated from the cross; or if it is separated, it becomes nothing more than a religion of words. Any theory or ism or religion could give comfort if it could convince men that God loved them. To the extent that they can bring this conviction many of them do help men in their trials. Their fatal defect is that they lose convincing power at those very places in life where no mere words can suffice, for at last they have nothing but words.

They do well in imaginary ills. They do something where troubles are light enough to be explained. But when inexplicable realities come they have no great sacrificial act of love, an act from God Himself, to point to and for that one reason they lose their power and leave men cold in heart. And at such times the Spirit Himself would fail if He spoke only from Himself. But He does not speak "of Himself". He can point to and voice what God's love has done for man's redemption in the transcendent sacrifice. That cross can never lose its power to convince. And for this reason the great apostle well said: "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."